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ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
SOUTH CAROLINA
COMMISSION
FOR THE BLIND

FOR THE
FISCAL YEAR 1974-1975



Printed Under the Direction of the
State Budget and Control Board

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September 2, 1975

The Honorable James B. Edwards
Governor of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

Dear Governor Edwards:

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind continued to provide more and better services to the blind in Fiscal Year 1974-75. This annual report not only describes the services but points to a substantial increase in services, by categories.

The Commission Board and staff have worked very hard throughout the year to bring about many significant changes contained herein.

Your support and that of the South Carolina General Assembly is most gratifying. May we take this opportunity to pledge to you our best efforts for FY 75-76.

Respectfully submitted,
COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
Henry F. Watts
Commissioner

COMMISSION

Mr. Allan C. Mustard	Columbia
Chairman	
Mr. W. Eugene Abrams	Anderson
Mr. A. Peter Anselmo	Florence
Mrs. T. E. Barham	Columbia
Mr. Samuel L. Zimmerman	Greenville
Mr. Richard B. Steele	Lancaster
Dr. William W. Vallotton	Charleston

ADMINISTRATION

As a result of legislation which amended the bill that established the South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB), the Commission Board was increased from five to seven members and the Executive Director was changed to Commissioner. The Board, which governs the Commission, is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. It establishes policies which are administered by the Commissioner who is assisted by a Medical Advisory Committee. Also, the administration consists of finance and accounting, public information, personnel, and data processing, and a register of all known blind South Carolinians. In FY'75 the blind register was computerized and the listing of categories by disability was begun.

Significantly, the Commission experienced continuing growth and stability in classified positions during FY'75. During the first six months, there was a 7% rate of staff turnover which improved to a very stable turnover rate of .06% during the last six months. This can be favorably compared with a 16.5% turnover rate during FY'74.

Some ten vacant positions which existed at the end of the first six months were filled and the Commission was fully staffed at 136 by June 30, 1975. To insure such positive conditions among personnel, the Commission pursued its policy to reward competent employees under the Merit System and

to promote staff within the Agency. Also, to make SCCB competitive in the labor market in recruiting and maintenance of staff, a study was undertaken to upgrade additional personnel.

The Commission closed out FY'75 with all State Appropriations and Federal Section 110 Funds disbursed in full. An estimated \$3,100,000 has been disbursed during FY'75. The total for FY'74 was \$2,271,900, an increase of approximately \$800,000 or 36% for FY'75.

In a continuing effort to upgrade the quality of services to blind persons, the Commission intensified its in-service training program during FY'75 by increasing the participation by staff in training events both in and out of state. Some 34% of the total staff traveled out of state for in-service training events during FY'75 as compared with 24% the previous year. There was an average of approximately two in-service training events per month in state which were attended by an average of ten staff members per event. Various professional staff were sponsored by SCCB for graduate work at several colleges and universities in the state.

FY'75 was a banner year for establishing close working relationships with other agencies and organizations to provide more and better services to blind and visually impaired citizens. An agreement was signed by the SCCB Commissioner and the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind wherein both agencies worked together to establish a cooperative rehabilitation facility to serve blind students at the school in Cedar Spring. SCCB and the State Lions Club formalized their working relationship by signing an agreement to co-sponsor a Mobile Eye Clinic which travels the state to conduct free eye screening for glaucoma and problems of visual acuity. In FY'75 SCCB obtained a Federal grant (innovation and expansion) for the purpose of establishing a work adjustment program in the Piedmont. Goodwill Industries of Upper South Carolina and SCCB then entered into a contract to develop the work adjustment program for the purpose of developing acceptable work habits, attitudes, and social skills needed by selected blind persons as a prerequisite to specific skill training or job productivity via

placement. The Commission signed cooperative agreements with other agencies such as the University of South Carolina, the South Carolina Arts Commission, and the South Carolina State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education.

Lastly, the Public Information Office increased its services by publishing a client newsletter and operating a toll-free telephone line.

The newsletter, called clientTOPICS, was designed to inform blind and visually impaired persons, including those persons with an eye condition which may or will lead to blindness, about the programs and services available to them in South Carolina. The toll-free telephone line, called TEL-A-QUEST, gave blind and sighted persons the opportunity to call the Commission, free-of-charge from anywhere in the State, to obtain information on programs and services for blind and visually impaired persons. These two services gave SCCB the best flow of direct communication between the people it serves and the Agency than ever before in its history.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Vocational rehabilitation is a restorative process which serves to preserve and develop the ability of blind and visually impaired men and women for gainful and satisfactory employment.

Fiscal Year 1975 was the most productive in the history of the SCCB Vocational Rehabilitation Division in that more services were rendered to more blind and visually impaired persons than ever before. Sixteen counselors in twelve offices and two facilities throughout the state shared an active caseload of 1,500 clients as of June 30, 1975, an increase of 15% reported on the same date the previous year. Most importantly, however, is the fact that there were 329 rehabilitants during FY'75 as compared with 254 during FY'74, which represents a one year increase of 29.5%. The Agency is proud to report that Federal statistics indicate a 43% change in rehabilitants over that of the previous year.

The projected number of rehabilitants for Fiscal Year 1975 was 260, which SCCB surpassed by 69 rehabilitants. This means that the Vocational Rehabilitation Division achieved 127% of its goal by year's end.

SCCB exceeded its projected goal of 60 Public Assistance rehabilitants for the year by 15, giving it a mark of 125% of goal achieved in this category.

Additionally, it was projected that SCCB would maintain a client load not less than 86% of whom would meet the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Criteria of Severe Impairment. Of the 329 rehabilitants for FY'75, 315, or 95.7% were classified as meeting this quality assurance factor. There was a 2% increase in this category over that of the previous fiscal year.

Significant increases were made in other areas during FY'75. For instance, the total average quarterly earnings of SCCB rehabilitants came to \$75,684.00, a 60.1% increase over the previous year. Actual earnings for the quarter ending June 30, 1975 amounted to \$75,756.00, a one year increase of 59.4%.

The true worth of a vocational rehabilitation program for the blind and visually impaired should be measured in terms other than numbers and percentages, such as human terms. For instance, in the not-too-distant past, blind and visually impaired persons found employment in only a few different types of jobs; jobs which were often menial, unsatisfying and provided little or no economic independence. Over the past few years, however, and especially during FY'75, SCCB rehabilitation counselors worked diligently to change the situation by seeking employment for their clients in a wide variety of occupations. During the year, for example, SCCB rehabilitants were placed in such occupational classifications as: professional, managerial and technical; clerical and sales; service; farming, fishery and forestry; processing; machine trades; bench work; and structural work. While working in such diverse occupations, SCCB rehabilitants are living proof to the sighted public that sightlessness need not mean helplessness, and that blind and visually impaired persons can compete on an equal basis for jobs which

provide them with an economic independence heretofore unrealized.

The SCCB Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center served more blind and visually impaired persons during FY'75 than in any previous year. Some 134 clients attended the Center and received adjustment and special skills training during the year, as compared with a total of 74 the previous year. This comes to a 74% increase in clients served during FY'75. Also, the Center served 60.2% more totally blind clients (68 vs 41) in FY'75 than it did last year. All areas of the State were represented. As of June 30, 1975, only six clients were awaiting entrance to the Center as compared with 17 awaiting entrance at the same time in FY'74.

Although the Work Evaluation Section (Jewish Employment and Vocational Service and the Singer-Graflex Evaluation System) began operating during FY'74, FY'75 was the first full year of operation. It was a very good year for this innovative program in that some 45 clients were enrolled and received evaluation, representing over one third of the total number of clients who attended The Center during the year.

Lastly, it is important to note that living conditions for the clients were vastly improved during FY'75. A new dormitory complete with recreational facilities was obtained for Center clients, resulting in a morale boost for them.

A very important function of the rehabilitation program is to reach out and provide training to blind and visually impaired persons in their homes. To accomplish this, the Agency operated two traveling Home Teaching and Mobility Units in the Piedmont and Lowcountry. During FY'75, which was the first full year for this function, the two home teachers and two mobility instructors traveled widely in their respective areas and visited homes to provide individualized instruction when needed. Over 600 home visits were made during the twelve month period.

A reorganization within the Vocational Rehabilitation Division took place during FY'75 whereby educational services provided to youth 14 years of age or older were no longer set apart as a specialized area; rather, such services were made a

part of the general ongoing rehabilitation process. Vocational rehabilitation counselors worked closely with students, parents and educational personnel through high school, and helped many blind students set vocational or higher educational goals. Selected blind students from schools statewide were given assistance for enrollment in technical education programs as well as colleges and universities.

Plans were also made for students to attend a pre-college summer program at the University of South Carolina, called Set (Students in Educational Transition). As a result of an agreement between the University of South Carolina and SCCB, a special resource room was established for the SET program as well as for blind and visually impaired students already in college. At the close of FY'75, there were 79 Commission-sponsored students enrolled in colleges and universities, an increase of 12.8% over the total enrolled at the same time in FY'74. Also, there were 34 clients enrolled in technical schools, a 61.9% increase over the number for the previous year.

The Commission updated its program for mobility instruction during the year by affording the coordinator of the mobility program training in the use of electronic devices for blind persons and by purchasing several devices such as the Russell "Pathsounder, the Laser Cane, and Binaural Sensor aids. Presently, SCCB is the only agency in the southeast which provides instruction in the use of these sophisticated devices.

At the end of the fiscal year, there were SCCB staff located in major population centers of the state who also served all other counties on an itinerant basis in Anderson, Aiken, Cedar Spring, Charleston, Columbia, Conway, Florence, Greenwood, Greenville, Orangeburg, Rock Hill, Spartanburg, Sumter, and Walterboro. From these offices and facilities the total range of rehabilitation services were offered.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

The Business Enterprises Program (BEP) opened 11 more business enterprises (vending stands) during FY'75 which represents a 19.3% increase in the number of stands

over the number reported at the end of the previous fiscal year. Continuing efforts were also made to refurbish many of the stands already in existence, which served to build morale and create more interest among the blind managers. Expansion of the program, of course, gave more blind persons than ever before the opportunity to run their own business and become economically independent.

There were 68 managers (operators) as of June 30, 1975, all of whom were legally blind. All persons served by BEP must meet the legal definition of blindness according to the Randolph-Sheppard Act which established such vending stand operations nationally. In the past, sighted managers have been used, but only on a temporary basis.

By training a blind person in retail merchandising and placing him in a business enterprise of his own, SCCB increased the opportunity for blind persons to achieve economic independence and productive employment. The State, as well as the blind person, benefitted tremendously from the BEP program each time a new business enterprise was opened.

Business enterprises throughout the State were located in office buildings, State institutions, technical schools, federal installations and private industries. BEP counselors negotiated contracts during the year which, for the first time in the State, resulted in the establishment of business enterprises in bank buildings. An industry in the Midlands opened up to allow SCCB to establish a business enterprise, which was also a first for BEP.

Total BEP sales approached the two million dollar mark during FY'75, as managers brought in \$1,715,690.00. This represents a 33.7% increase in total sales over the last twelve month period. In spite of inflated wholesale prices, managers' actual earnings remained relatively close to that of FY'74. Average manager income amounted to \$809.33 per month, an increase of 13.8% over FY'74.

Overall, BEP had a good year. With working conditions improved for the managers, program expansion, improved service to managers, and gross sales on the rise, BEP laid the groundwork for even greater growth and the very real possibility of breaking the two million dollar mark in FY'76.

HOME INDUSTRIES

The Home Industries Program provides work and supplemental income for homebound blind persons who cannot compete in the labor market. Raw materials for producing craft items such as stuffed toys, mats, rugs, tote bags, artificial flowers, shawls and crocheted items are shipped to the homes of the workers. They return the finished products to SCCB's retail and wholesale outlet, Blindcraft, for inspection and marketing. All sales and profits are returned to the person making the crafts.

Fiscal Year 1975 was one of progress and innovation for the Home Industries Program. New craft items were designed and produced and have been in great demand by customers. For instance, two of the latest and most popular products during the year were hanging flower baskets and bicentennial dolls. New markets were found in Myrtle Beach, as the number of vendors selling Blindcraft merchandise in this popular tourist resort increased from one to eight in FY'75. Also serving to increase the sales volume was a wholesale distributor for gift shops who began placing daily orders.

Craft items in FY'75 were marketed in wholesale shipments and were sent to customers in Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois and New York. All items, whether sold at Blindcraft or out of state, carry the label "Made by the Blind of South Carolina."

As of December 31, 1974, 39 homebound blind clients had received payment for their work and 47 were recipients at the end of June 1975. This represents an increase of 11.9% in the number of blind craftsmen over June 1974. The average monthly payment per worker was \$26.86, and there were 17 client consignees, an 88.8% increase over the number reported at the end of FY'74. Total sales during the Fiscal Year came to \$58,461.58.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION UNIT

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) is the only agency for the blind in the nation with a Disability Determination Unit that adjudicates claims for Social Security benefits where blindness is alleged as the primary disability.

Those individuals who meet the level of severity prescribed by law are recommended for an allowance. Those persons who do not meet the above standard are still considered on the basis of age, training, vocational experience, et cetera, before a decision is reached.

During the past fiscal year, the Disability Determination Unit received 595 claims for Social Security Disability Benefits and Supplemental Security Income Benefits. This represents a 16.2% increase in claims received over the year before. Decisions were rendered on 589 cases, which represents a 17% increase for FY'75 over last year. The new Federally-operated Supplemental Security Income program, which began January 1, 1974, replaced the Federal-State programs of public assistance payments to the blind or disabled. Now, in its first full year of operation under this system, the SCCB Disability Determination Unit had a substantial increase in its disability case load. Federal reports indicate that the SCCB's Disability Determination Unit ranks very high in effectiveness by rendering accurate and timely decisions.

PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS

The Prevention of Blindness Department continued to expand its services during FY'75. Many new sources of referral were found and cooperative relationships with other agencies were established.

For the first year, the pathology clinics in Walterboro, Aiken and Orangeburg were operational. New quarters were found for the Walterboro and Aiken offices.

For over half of the fiscal year, the Low-Vision Clinic in Columbia was operational, and at year's end the facility was open once a week. Efforts were underway to expand the facility due to demand.

The Mobile Eye Clinic, which SCCB co-sponsors with the South Carolina Lions Sight Conservation Association, traveled to locations throughout the state and gave free eye screening to the public for visual acuity and glaucoma. During FY'75, approximately 16,836 eye screenings were con-

ducted and of these, 468 persons were referred to SCCB for services.

As mentioned previously, the Blind Register was computerized during the year. The Register, kept by the Prevention Department, was set up for quarterly review. According to Prevention personnel, at the end of the fiscal year the Register was in the best shape ever. At this time, the Register listed 6,024 persons as legally blind.

More eye surgeries were sponsored during FY'75 than in the previous year. There was an increase from 566 in FY'74 to 757 in FY'75, which means a 33.7% increase in the one year period. As in the past, cataracts accounted for the greatest number of operations. There were 371 cataract surgeries sponsored.

Glaucoma operations during the fiscal year amounted to 35, and some 1,835 persons were listed on the Glaucoma Register as of June 30, 1975. Accidents continued to take their toll; however, not as many during this reporting period resulted in emergency operations as during FY'74. Emergency operations sponsored by SCCB decreased from 63 in FY'74 to 35 in FY'75. Enucleations accounted for 18 operations, after which patients were fitted with prosthesis.

Operations for children with strabismus increased substantially during the year, as 78 were sponsored in FY'75 as compared with 55 in FY'74. Other eye conditions which necessitated surgery — such as irreversible pathologies — accounted for 223 operations.

Indeed, it was an extremely busy year for the Prevention Department as it delivered more services than ever before. Eye examinations by eye specialists were up by 45.6% over the total Fiscal Year 1974: This year there were 3,439 eye examinations sponsored by the Commission. Visual aids, such as glasses, contact lenses and prosthesis, were provided as a direct result of statewide screening. The department purchased 1,169 visual aids for patients it sponsored in FY'75, which meant a 32.8% increase over FY'74.

Eye re-examinations totaled 2,439 for FY'75, and there

were 1,171 glaucoma re-checks. There was an increase of 26.6% more medical examinations given to clients this year as compared with the total for FY'74. SCCB sponsored 82 persons for medical exams. In addition, 42 clients received medication on a monthly basis during FY'75, an increase of 16.6% over that of the year before.

The Prevention of Blindness Department did more during the year than provide medical services. Some 640 persons were provided transportation during the twelve month period which enabled them to take advantage of the services of the department.

DIVISION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Division of Children's Services experienced its best year ever in FY'75. The year was characterized by implementation of numerous innovative projects, the development of existing services, and planning new projects for FY'76.

The goal of this division has been to maximize the potential and productive activity of every severely visually impaired child (from birth to 14 years of age) in South Carolina. To accomplish this during FY'75, three consultants provided services designed to help children get started on the right path to a full life, to help them recognize ways to compensate for their visual handicap, and to help family members in their own adjustment to blindness.

New projects during FY'75 included: A workshop for parents and their visually impaired children (the third such workshop in the nation); recreation programs for young blind children such as swimming classes, day camps and total recreation camps; programs for orientation for pre-school age blind children; optacon training for blind youth; use of closed circuit television systems as an educational aid for severely visually impaired children; and a newsletter published monthly for parents of visually impaired children.

The Division continued throughout the year with early intervention with blind infants and pre-schoolers. Also, the consultants provided diagnostic assessment prescriptive program planning for individualized instruction both at home and

at school. As in the past, a lending library of materials and books for parents and teachers was in operation. For example, optical aids and devices for visually impaired children were offered, along with talking book records, textbooks recorded on tape, and specially made educational games and developmental toys.

Groundwork was laid during FY'75 for a wide variety of new projects. Plans are in the making to provide such services as: Radio talking book programming for young blind children; a workshop geared to meet the needs of parents of blind multiply handicapped children; a remedial summer program designed to meet individual needs of developmentally delayed or educationally delayed blind children; and a cooperative agreement with another State Agency which will benefit mutual clients, just to name a few.

At the end of the year, there were 140 clients from the Piedmont, 104 clients in the Midlands, and 115 from the Coastal Plains, making a total of 359 blind children being served by this division. This figures to be a caseload increase of 96 clients, or 36.5% more clients who were served in FY'75 than in FY'74.

MATERIAL AND TEXTBOOK CENTER

Marked increases in all phases of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind's Material and Textbook Center occurred during FY'75. It produced substantially more printed and taped material for blind persons than in any previous year. Also, new equipment was purchased, such as a cassette duplicator, which made it possible to offer better service to Commission staff.

The function of the Material and Textbook Center during the year was diverse, and it served blind South Carolinians of all ages. These services included; provision of aids to further the education or development of blind persons; work with any Federal or State agencies, school districts, special schools, and individuals concerned with the development of the blind; and support of all SCCB staff.

Specifically, the Center obtained material in braille, on

tape and in large type; coordinated programs for the distribution of talking book machines and cassette tape players; produced large print textbooks for use by legally blind students and adults; provided information on sources of braille and large print books, braille writing equipment, talking book records and machines, tape recorders, raised maps and globes, mathematical equipment, games and other special devices for the blind; and purchased braille and large print books and special equipment for loan whenever a school district could not purchase it.

During FY'75, the Center brailled 18,330 pages, an increase of 3,045 pages over FY'74. The 2,810 tape reels recorded exceeded the output of the previous year. The number of braille pages duplicated by the Thermoform process came to 7,970, also an increase. Tape duplicating amounted to 1,580. There was a tremendous upsurge in duplication of cassettes, as the Center duplicated 1,795 tapes in FY'75 as compared with 402 the year before. The production of large print books climbed to 364 in FY'75 from 280 the previous year. In terms of circulation, the Center accounted for 695 talking book titles, which was almost triple the number circulated the year before. Also, the Center stepped up circulation of braille volumes with 695 for this year as compared with 232 in FY'74. There were 591 large print volumes circulated, an increase of 324 volumes in one year.

At the conclusion of FY'75, the Center had 2,281 talking book machines in use. Some 119 cassette recorder/players were issued. In addition, in use at year's end were 82 cassette recorders, 185 cassette players, and 20 tape recorders.

RADIO TALKING BOOK SERVICE

The Commission for the Blind Radio Talking Book Service (RTBS) expanded during FY'75 by broadcasting to the Coastal Plains region from a new station in Charleston. Construction on a third station proceeded in Sumter during the year in preparation for an August move so RTBS broadcasting would cover the Midlands, thus the entire state.

The South Carolina ETV Radio Network worked closely with SCCB throughout the year, making the move of the cen-

tral studio from Greenville to Columbia possible. Volunteers in Greenville and Charleston read the local news, and two interns were provided the Broadcaster-Coordinator in Columbia. Some 650 additional radio receivers were purchased and delivery to blind persons was begun. Application for a Federal grant was filed with the Older American Act so SCCB could purchase more receivers. Also, a State telephone line was made available by ETV for one hour a day which allowed blind persons to call RTBS from throughout the State to provide input.

RTBS, which operated from the Greenville office during the first part of FY'75, broadcast programs to blind citizens especially designed to meet their needs. A major aim of the sub-channel's programming has been to keep its listeners up-to-date on current affairs at all levels. The South Carolina RTBS is the third station in the nation to broadcast exclusively for blind people and is the second nationwide to be initiated by a state agency.

Programming included in-depth reading of newspapers when they appear, and also reading of current news magazines, educational materials for the blind, a book of the week, interviews with successful blind people, a children's hour, travelogue, consumer tips, and descriptions of programs and services in which blind people may enroll.

The service is aired over an FM sub-channel and can be picked up by specially designed receivers made available through the Commission to qualified listeners. As of June 30, 1975, RTBS had an estimated 600 listeners who picked up the program on the 400 receivers already distributed.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Volunteer Services, which was a function of the Materials and Textbook Center previously, was established as a separate program of Special Services when a part-time coordinator was hired at the beginning of FY'75. After the program expanded, the coordinator began work full time.

It has been the function of Volunteer Services to serve the total client population falling within the milieu of SCCB ser-

vices. It also served persons who had special media needs in relationship to their positions.

Since Volunteer Services had only been established for one year, a priority of services was developed. FY'75 was spent in developing braille transcribers and a corps of taping volunteers. Materials in braille and on tape not available from other sources were provided by this section. Services were rendered on a first-come, first-serve basis with the exception that braille textbooks for children within the public schools took priority.

SPECIAL SERVICES STORE

The Special Services Store provides a valuable service to many blind South Carolinians. Using this service, a blind person can purchase over-the-counter special aids and devices that formerly had to be mail ordered.

A wide variety of items stocked and sold at cost include Braille watches, Braille games, Braille paper and writing devices, white canes of various lengths, tape recorders, optical aids and Braille Bibles, among others.

The store serves two major functions. First various aids and appliances are stocked for purchase by legally blind South Carolinians. Also, these items are frequently bought by certain Commission Divisions for use in serving their clients. The second function of the Special Services Store is to house various supply items for classes held at the Training Center, such as art supplies and communications and mobility training equipment. A revolving fund is maintained for this program, and as items are sold, new orders are placed to replenish the stock.

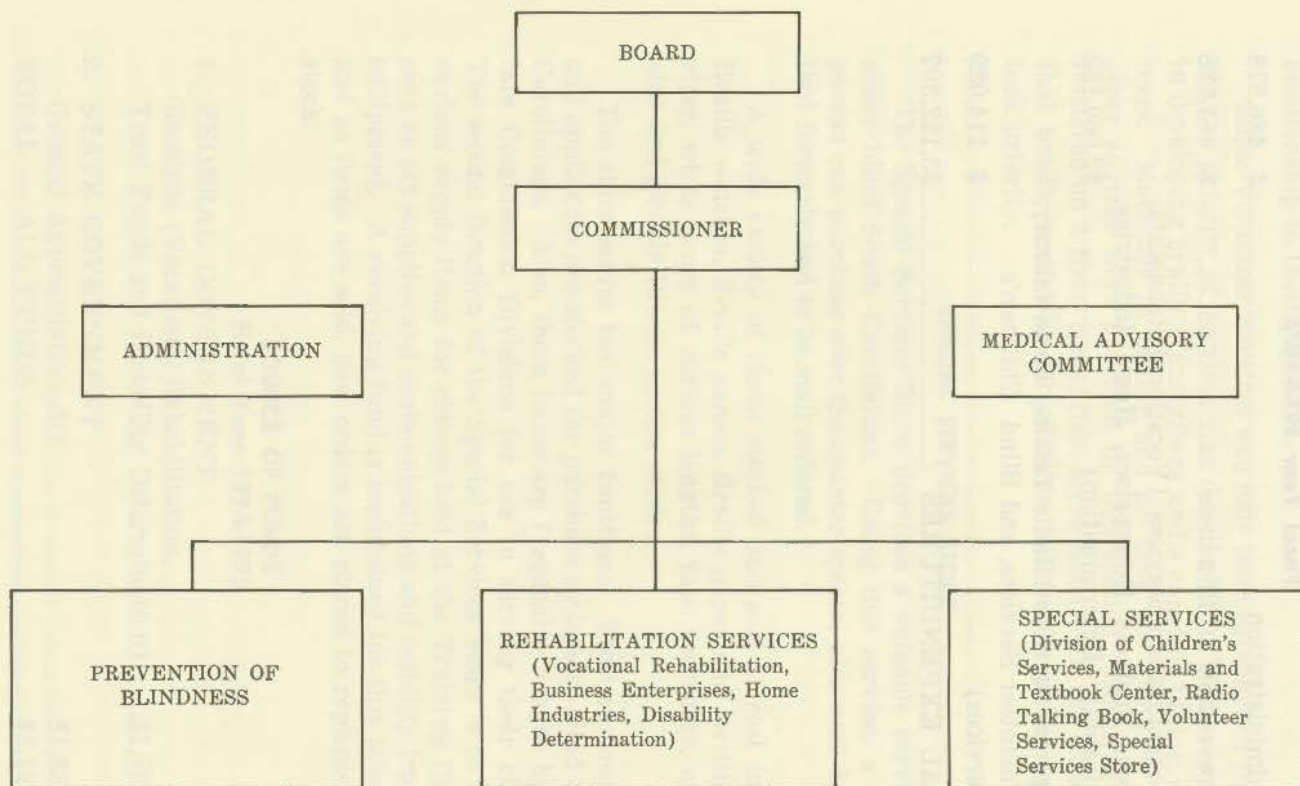
SOURCE OF FUNDS **Fiscal Year 1974-1975**

1. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	
Receipts (Vocational Rehabilitation, Trust Funds and Disability Determination)	\$1,797,248
2. STATE GOVERNMENT	
General Appropriation Act	\$1,325,149
TOTAL — ALL FUNDS	\$3,122,397

EXPENDITURES

Fiscal Year 1974-1975

1. Administration	\$ 486,878
2. Prevention of Blindness	\$ 461,328
3. Rehabilitation Services (Vocational Rehabilitation, Business Enterprises, Home Industries, Disability Determination)	\$2,060,162
4. Special Services (Radio Talking Book, Library, Volunteer Services, and Blind Children's Services)	\$ 114,029
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$3,122,397



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
South Carolina Commission for the Blind